

Completion of police station pushed back two months Contractor blames weather, design flaw for delay

Written by Mark Jaeger
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The Saukville Village Board approved the general contractor's request Tuesday to push back the completion date of the police station by two months.

Brian LaBonte, project manager with Creative Contractors, asked trustees to approve the extension on the \$3.9 million police station, citing a host of unforeseen circumstances.

According to LaBonte, construction of the 14,000-square-foot building will be "substantially completed" by April 27. The phrase means the police department will be able to occupy the building at that date, although exterior improvements such as paving and landscaping won't be completed.

The original construction timetable called for the building to be done by Feb. 28. After some change orders, that deadline was moved back to March 6.

"While we have tried to keep this project on schedule, it has proven to require additional time," LaBonte wrote in a memo to Village Administrator Dawn Wagner.

Part of the delay was blamed on re-engineering required on the clearstory, which towers over the buildings central lobby. Designing errors and the resulting changes in contracts delayed the project by five weeks, according to the memo.

Weather also played a role in the delays, with exceptionally wet weather in the spring and frigid cold during the winter.

Wet conditions delayed initial approval of the footings, holding up progress at the earliest stages of the project.

"We almost lost a dozer back there it was so wet, and it has been a brutal winter," noted Public Works Director Roy Wilhelm.

Substantial amounts of work need to be done on electrical systems, flooring and wood trim, as well as the building's mechanical systems.

Despite the amount of work that still needs to be done, LaBonte said the contractor is comfortable with the new schedule.

"It is a strong commitment that we have to get it done. It is a tight schedule for April 27," he said.

Trustees were agreeable to accept the revised construction schedule after learning the delay would not cost the village additional money.

"It is like a beehive of activity now. We know this delay is going to end up costing money, but that cost is not coming out of our end," Wagner told trustees.

"In any construction project time is money, but in this case all it is costing us is time," said Trustee Bob Hamann, who has served as board liaison during the construction process.

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“We designed this building to meet our needs for the next 25 years. I would guess that 20 years from now, nobody is going to know completion of this building was delayed by two months. There are no corners being cut.”

Police Chief Bill Meloy said he is anxious to move into the new quarters, but said some matters are more important than schedules.

“I’d rather see a decent building. They have been very good to work with,” Meloy said of the contractors and architects.

Officials said the delay will have little impact on village operations, because there is no one waiting to occupy the current police facility after the department moves into its new quarters.

Eventually, village offices are expected to expand into the vacated police area.